

[89]

LETTER

FROM THE

COMMISSIONER OF THE PUBLIC BUILDINGS

TRANSMITTING,

PURSUANT TO A RESOLUTION

OF THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE 2d INST.

COPIES

OF THE

ORIGINAL DEED OF CONVEYANCE TO THE TRUSTEES

OF

THE UNITED STATES,

FOR

The Ground in the City of Washington; and Copies of the Correspondence in relation to the location of the Public Offices on the President's Square.

FEBRUARY 10, 1818.

Read, and referred to the committee on so much of the President's message as relates to public buildings and additional executive offices.

WASHINGTON:

PRINTED BY E. DE KRAFFT.

1818.

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LETTER

FROM THE

COMMISSIONER OF THE PUBLIC BUILDINGS

TRANSMITTING

PURSUANT TO A RESOLUTION

OF THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE 41ST

CONGRESS

TO THE

ORIGINAL DEED OF CONVEYANCE TO THE TRUSTEES

OF

THE UNITED STATES

AND

THE Ground in the City of Washington, and a portion of the Government
lands in relation to the location of the Public Buildings on the 17th

Street - District

TRANSACTED 10, 1818

Read and referred to the Committee on the part of the President's mes-
sage as relates to public buildings and additional executive offices.

WASHINGTON

PRINTED BY E. DE KRAFFT

1818

Office of Commissioner of Public Buildings,

February 6, 1818.

SIR,

In compliance with a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 2d instant, I now enclose a copy of one of the original deeds of conveyance, to the trustees of the United States, for the ground in the city of Washington, (the deeds from the other proprietors being of the same tenor,) also copies of all the correspondence which I have been able to find in this office, relating to the location of the public offices, on the President's square.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect,

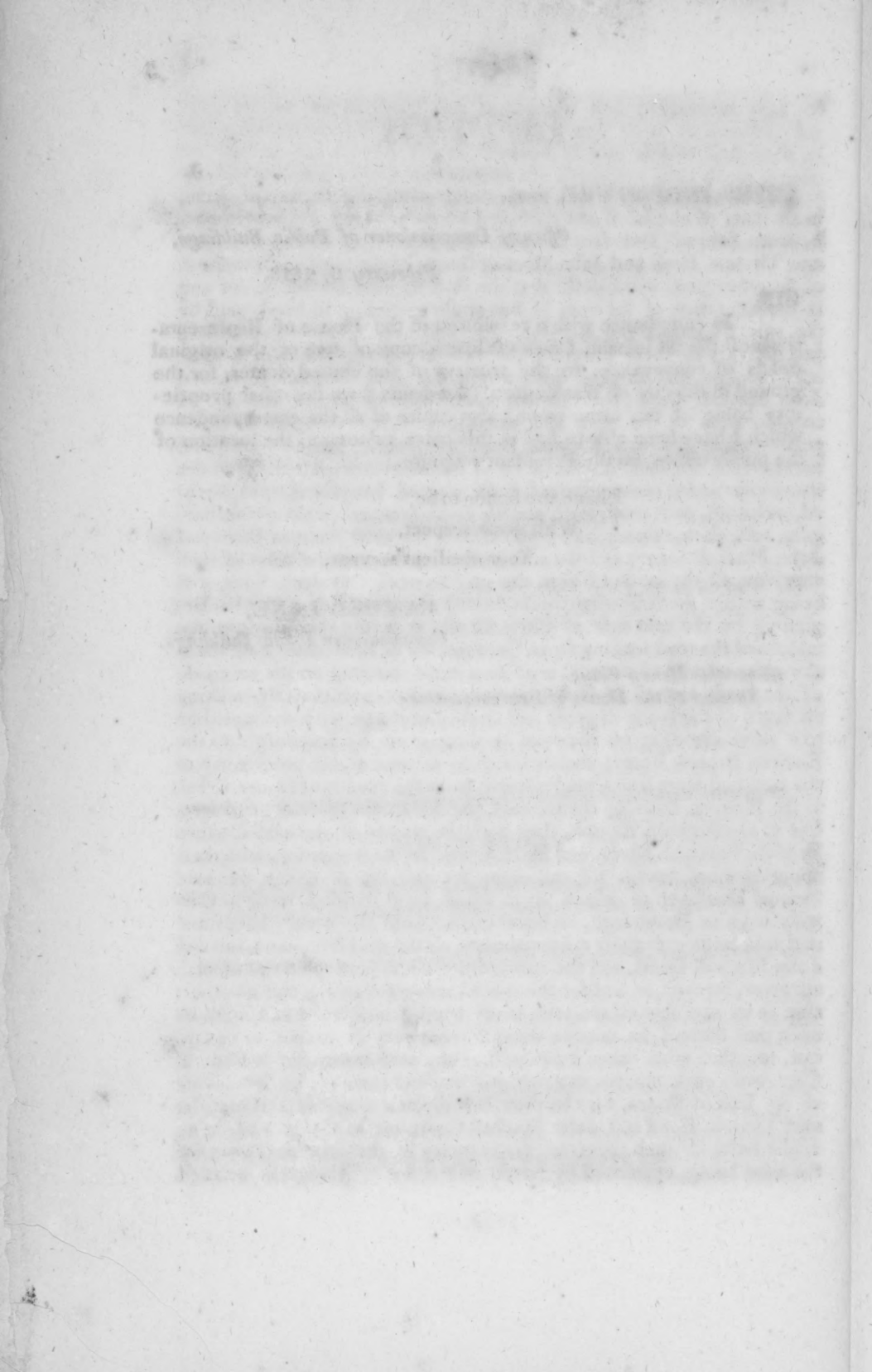
Your obedient servant,

SAMUEL LANE,

Commissioner Public Buildings.

Honorable Henry Clay,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.



THIS INDENTURE, made this twenty-eighth day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety one, between Samuel Davidson, of the state Maryland, of the one part, and Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, of the state of Maryland, of the other part, witnesseth: that the said Samuel Davidson, for and in consideration of the sum of five shillings to him in hand, paid by the said Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, before the sealing and delivery of these presents, the receipt whereof he doth hereby acknowledge, and thereof doth acquit the said Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, their executors and administrators, and also in consideration of the uses and trusts hereinafter mentioned, to be performed by the said Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, and the survivor of them, and the heirs of such survivor, according to the true intent and meaning thereof, hath granted, bargained, sold, aliened, released, and confirmed, and by these presence, doth grant, bargain, sell, alien, release, and confirm unto the said Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, and the survivor of them, and the heirs of such survivor, all the lands of him, the said Samuel Davidson, lying and being within the following limits, boundaries, and lines, to wit: Beginning on the east side of Rock Creek, at a stone standing in the middle of the road leading from Georgetown to Bladensburg; thence along the middle of the said road to a stone standing on the east side of the reedy branch of Goose Creek; thence southeasterly, making an angle of sixty-one degrees and twenty minutes, with the meridian to a stone standing on the road leading from Bladensburg to the Eastern Branch Ferry; thence south to a stone eighty poles north of the east and west line already drawn from the mouth of Goose Creek to the Eastern Branch; thence east, parallel to the said east and west line to the Eastern Branch, then with the waters of the said Eastern Branch, Potomak River, and Rock Creek, to the beginning, with their appurtenances, except all and every lot and lots of which the said Samuel Davidson is seized, or to which he is entitled, lying in Carrollsburgh or Hamburgh, to have and to hold the hereby bargained and sold lands with their appurtenances, to the said Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, and the survivor of them, and the heirs of such survivor, forever, to and for the special trusts following, and no other; that is to say: that all the said lands hereby bargained and sold, or such part thereof, as may be thought necessary or proper to be laid out, together with other lands within the said limits, for a Federal City, with such streets, squares, parcels, and lots, as the Presidents of the United States, for the time being, shall approve: and that the said Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, or the survivor of them, or the heirs of such survivor, shall convey to the commissioners for the time being, appointed by virtue of the act of Congress, entitled

"An act for establishing the temporary and permanent seat of the government of the United States, and their successors, for the use of the United States, forever, all the streets and such of the said squares, parcels and lots, as the President shall deem proper for the use of the United States. And that as to the residue of the said lots, into which the said land hereby bargained and sold, shall have been laid off and divided, that a fair and equal division of them shall be made; and if no other mode of division shall be agreed on by consent of the said Samuel Davidson and the commissioners for the time being, then such residue of the said lots, shall be divided every other lot alternate to the said Samuel Davidson; and it shall in that event, be determined by lot, whether the said Samuel Davidson shall begin with the lot of the lowest number laid out on the said land, or the following number; and all the said lots which may in any manner be divided or assigned to the said Samuel Davidson, shall thereupon, together with any part of the said bargained and sold land, if any, which shall not have been laid out in the said city, be conveyed to the said Samuel Davidson, his heirs or assigns, by the said Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, or the survivor of them, or the heirs of such survivor; and that the said other lots shall and may be sold at such time or times, in such manner, and on such terms and conditions, as the President of the United States, for the time being, shall direct. And the said Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, or the survivor of them, or the heirs of such survivor, will, on the order and direction of the President, convey all the lots, so sold and ordered to be conveyed, to the respective purchasers in fee simple, according to the terms and conditions of such purchases; and the produce of the sales of the said lots, when sold as aforesaid, shall, in the first place, be applied to the payment, in money, to the said Samuel Davidson, his executors, administrators, or assigns, for all the part of the land hereby bargained and sold, which shall have been laid off in lots, squares, or parcels, and appropriated as aforesaid to the use of the United States, at the rate of twenty-five pounds per acre, not accounting the said streets as part thereof; and the said twenty-five pounds per acre being so paid, or in any other manner satisfied, that then the produce of the same sales, or what thereof may remain as aforesaid, in money, or security of any kind, shall be paid, assigned, transferred, and delivered over to the President, for the time being, as a grant of money, and to be applied for the purposes, and according to the act of Congress aforesaid. But the said conveyances to the said Samuel Davidson, his heirs or assigns, as well as the conveyances to the purchasers, shall be on, and subject to, such terms and conditions, as shall be thought reasonable by the President, for the time being, for regulating the materials and manner of the buildings and improvements on the lots generally, in the said city, or in particular streets or parts thereof, for common convenience, safety, and order; provided, such terms and conditions be declared before the sales of any of the said lots, under the direction of the President. And in trust further,

and on the agreement that he, the said Samuel Davidson, his heirs or assigns, shall and may continue his possession and occupation of the said land hereby bargained and sold at his or their will and pleasure, until the same shall be occupied under the said appropriations for the use of the United States, as aforesaid, or by purchasers. And when any lots or parcels shall be occupied under purchase or appropriation, then, and not till then, shall the said Samuel Davidson relinquish his occupation thereof. And in trust also as to the trees, timber, and wood on the premises, that he, the said Samuel Davidson, his heirs or assigns, may freely cut down, take, and use the same as his or their property, except such of the trees and wood growing, as the President or commissioners aforesaid may judge proper, and give notice, shall be left for ornaments; for which the just and reasonable value shall be paid to the said Samuel Davidson, his executors, administrators, or assigns, exclusive of the said twenty-five pounds per acre for the land. And in case the arrangement of the streets, lots, and the like, will conveniently admit of it, he, the said Samuel Davidson, his heirs and assigns, shall, if he so desires it, possess and retain his buildings and grave yard, if any, on the hereby bargained and sold lands, paying to the Presidents at the rate of twelve pounds ten shillings per acre of the land so retained, because of such buildings and grave yards to be applied as aforesaid, and the same shall be thereupon conveyed to the said Samuel Davidson, his heirs and assigns, with his lots; and if the arrangements of the streets, lots, and the like, will not conveniently admit of such retention, and it shall become necessary to remove such buildings, then the said Samuel Davidson, his executors, administrators, or assigns, shall be paid the reasonable value thereof, in the same manner as the squares or other ground appropriated for the use of the United States, are to be paid for. And because it may so happen that by the deaths or removals of the said Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, and from other causes, difficulties may occur in fully performing the said trusts, by executing all the said conveyances, if no eventual provision is made, it is therefore agreed and covenanted between all the said parties, that the said Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, or either of them, or the heirs of either of them, lawfully may, and that they, at any time, at the request of the President of the United States, for the time being, will convey all or any of the said lands hereby bargained and sold, which shall not then have been conveyed in execution of the trusts aforesaid, to such person or persons as he shall appoint, in fee simple, subject to the trusts then remaining to be executed, and to the end that the same be perfected. And it is further granted and agreed between all the said parties, and each of the said parties doth for himself and his heirs covenant and grant to and with the others of them, that he and they shall and will, if required by the President of the United States, for the time being, join in, and execute any further deed or deeds for carrying into effect the trust purposes, and true intent of this present deed. In witness whereof,

the parties to these presents, have hereunto interchangeably set their hands, and affixed their seals the day and year first above written.

SAMUEL DAVIDSON. [L. s.]

*Signed, sealed, and delivered,
in the presence of*

R. HOOE,

DANIEL JENIFER, JR.

Received on the day and year first above written, of and from the within named Thomas Beall and John Mackall Gantt, the sum of five shillings currency, the consideration money within mentioned to be by them paid to me.

SAMUEL DAVIDSON.

R. HOOE,

DANIEL JENIFER, JR.

On the twenty-eighth day of June, 1791, came before me, one of the judges of the General Court, the within named Samuel Davidson, and acknowledged the within and foregoing instrument of writing to be his act and deed.

Before THOMAS JOHNSON.

Extract of a letter from George Washington, President of the United States, to the Commissioners of the City of Washington, dated Mount Vernon, 21st October, 1796.

“As the business of the executive officers will be chiefly, if not altogether, with the President, sites for their offices ought to be convenient to his residence; but as the identical spots can be better chosen on the ground, with the plan of the city before me, than by the latter alone, I shall postpone this decision until my arrival there.”

Extract of a letter from George Washington, President of the United States, to the Commissioners of the City of Washington, dated at Philadelphia, 3d March, 1797.

“GENTLEMEN,

“Three things relative to the City of Washington, call for my decision, and this is the last day I have power to give any.

"The first respects the dispute with Mr. Law, touching the conveyances of lots. The second, to my approbation of the plans for the executive offices. The third," &c.

"The second not only meets my approbation, but is much approved also by the heads of departments, and may, when the funds and other circumstances will permit, be carried into effect, for which purpose the plans are returned with my approving signature."

Copy of a letter from Alexander White, one of the Commissioners of Washington City, to the Commissioners of Washington City, dated at Philadelphia, 8th March, 1798.

GENTLEMEN,

I have your favor of the 27th ultimo. I am sorry that any difficulty has arisen respecting the roof of the capitol, which renders a full board necessary to its completion. I am still more concerned to find the prospects here so gloomy. I had not been long in this city till I found opinions circulating, which never came from me, mostly savoring of the clashing interests which have caused so much discord in Washington. Some proposed that there should be a small house erected near the capitol, for the residence of the President, and that the executive offices should be built in the same vicinity; some wish this house to be the permanent, others the temporary residence of the President. Those who wish it permanent talk of making a judiciary of the President's house, and allege that the seat of justice would be as advantageous to the adjacent proprietors as the residence of the President. Others propose making the President's house the residence of Congress; and too many on both sides of this question are of opinion, that only one of these houses should, for the present be finished, and that any money granted, should be appropriated by the act to finishing the one which might be preferred. Another opinion prevailed that we wanted only 100,000 dollars; and the old clamor against the style of the buildings was revived. I endeavored to suppress all these opinions, and to show, that although the plans of the buildings may be extensive, yet the mode the late President had pointed out, for their completion, is the most proper now to be pursued. By an adherence to the line of conduct, I have given offence probably to Mr. Law, certainly to general Forrest, between whom and myself some letters passed, and an explanatory conversation took place. This discussion brought to light several facts, of which I had previously no knowledge, and one which had been communicated to me confidentially, by a person whom I could not suspect of stating a falsehood, yet attended with some circumstances which rendered it difficult to give credit to it; this was, that the commissioners had

authorized or requested general Forrest to give his aid or assistance in promoting the business on which I was sent. It really did appear to me highly improbable, that you should have appointed an assistant without giving me notice, that we might have formed some system and co-operation in the measures to be pursued. No such notice was given me, nor did general Forrest ever give the most distant hint of it, till the correspondence abovementioned brought it forth. The facts previously unknown to me are, that the President's house had, from the beginning, through the management or influence of some of those interested in the adjacent property, been calculated for the accommodation of Congress, and that general Forrest had lately procured from Mr. Hoban, estimates of finishing it, both for the reception of Congress and the residence of the President; that the first, (exclusive of slating the roof,) might be done for 12,000 dollars, and that the latter would cost 54,000. General Forrest said Mr. Hoban at first doubted the propriety of giving these estimates, but at length consented. How easy would it have been to apply to the board, had those estimates been intended for purposes which the general thought proper to avow? In this state of things, the committee had several meetings before they could come to any resolution. Yesterday morning a majority agreed to recommend the appropriation of 100,000 only, for which measure Mr. Craik was a strenuous advocate. But part of the majority wished the money to be applied to finishing the north wing of the capitol, and erecting a temporary house for the President, and executive offices as near to it as may be. An amendment to that effect was offered by Mr. Sprigg; this lay over for consideration till to-day; it was withdrawn, and another amendment offered confining the appropriation to the capitol. These amendments brought up Mr. Craik with great warmth against them, on the principles that it was a breach of faith with those who had given up their property in expectation that the building would be completed according to the original plan, and with still more zeal on the principles that if the original system was broke through, the President's house was the proper place for the reception of Congress. On this point he suggested the propriety of sending a committee to view on the spot, the advantages of the rival houses: a member of the committee observed, that he supposed when the committee should report, another committee must be sent to inquire whether they had done their duty. At length this amendment was also withdrawn, the resolution of yesterday reconsidered, and a resolution agreed to, recommending the appropriation of \$200,000 at three annual instalments, which it is expected, will complete the capitol, the President's house, and the executive offices: the judiciary not being considered as immediately necessary. This resolution, and a note of mine given in at the desire of the committee, stating the last loan from Maryland and its operation on our funds, agreeably to our letter to the President on that subject, were reported to the House, and ordered to be printed. Whatever may be the event of this measure,

it is my opinion, we ought as soon as possible, to advertise a sale of Morriss and Greenleaf's lots to the amount of the sum due. If I recollect right, we wrote them that this measure could not be postponed longer than till the first of March. I conversed to day with a master builder, in this city, respecting the wages of mechanics, he says it cannot yet be ascertained, but he expects the wages of stonecutters will be nine shillings, and of bricklayers twelve and six per day. There is no mahogany yet arrived.

I am with great regard and respect,
Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servant,

ALEXANDER WHITE.

*Commissioners of the federal buildings,
City of Washington.*

Copy of a letter from Alexander White, one of the commissioners of Washington City, to the commissioners of Washington City, Philadelphia, 11th March, 1798.

GENTLEMEN,

Since my letter of the 8th inst. I have been a good deal among the members of Congress, and am of opinion, that no law will pass granting money for the federal buildings, without appropriating it to the objects which Congress may approve, unless the President's sentiments on the subject are previously known. I was alarmed at the consequence of that opinion, because I knew the investigation necessary to determine the proper objects would lead to a delay, and might, probably end in a rejection of our memorial. I therefore waited on the President, to know whether it would be agreeable to him that I should communicate what had passed between him and me on the subject. The President was pleased to say, that what he had said to me, he had not mentioned to any other person. He repeated the substance of former conversations, by observing, that with respect to the President's house, so far as concerns himself, he is perfectly satisfied. He said he could go a mile and a half, whenever his official duty may require it, as long as he shall remain in office, or if he should find it inconvenient, he could hire a house: that he paid great regard to the opinion of General Washington, but from the best view he could take of the subject, he was of opinion, that the executive offices ought to be as near the capitol, as a convenient place could be found for them,

as well for the accommodation of the members of Congress, who have frequent occasion to recur to those offices, as a means of collecting the inhabitants to a point, so as to secure accommodations for the government when the time comes for its removal; but that he would not reverse the orders of his predecessor, without knowing your sentiments—if you concur with him, he will then make his opinion known. It is my earnest wish, that the plans of the late President, and his orders for carrying them into effect, in every respect be fulfilled; but, as I said before, I do not believe a grant of money can be obtained, without particularly appropriating it, unless the appropriation is prevented by a previous knowledge of the President's intentions. I find no advocate for the President's house as the residence of Congress, except Mr. Craik, and the measures which have been taken to adopt it to that purpose, as stated by Gen. Forrest, are not calculated to gain proselytes; yet it will probably be made a question—much time will be spent, and perhaps, the benefits expected from our application to Congress, totally frustrated. I sincerely wish, that in a question of this delicacy and importance, there may be unanimity; but if that cannot be obtained, I would suggest the propriety of individual opinion. Should it be determined, that the executive offices shall be near the capitol, I would suggest the propriety of finishing the south wing for their reception, rather than erecting other buildings; for sure I am, that that superb and elegant building will not be finished during the present age, unless it is appropriated to some useful purpose. The west part of the main body may, in that case, be finished for the House of Representatives. The President has read the draft from which this letter is taken, and says he has no corrections to make.

I am, with sentiments of great regard,
Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servant,

ALEX. WHITE.

*Commissioners of the Federal Buildings,
Washington.*

Washington, 16th March, 1798.

SIR,

We received your two favors of the 8th and 11th inst. and are desirous of expressing our opinions as soon as possible, on this mo-

mentous occasion. The President's opinion, derived from your letter, is, that the offices for the several departments ought to be near the capitol, and that he is willing to reverse the appropriations of the late President, if the board advise the measure. We understand that it is your opinion, that the original destination of the President's house ought to be changed, and the south wing of the capitol finished for the public offices.

When the late President of the United States called together the original proprietors who granted the soil on which the Federal City was to be erected, he laid before them a plan, with the present appropriation, for the capitol and President's house, and the offices for the several departments contiguous to the latter; and under the faith of these several appropriations, thus publicly declared, the proprietors agreed to make the several grants which afterwards took place. These two appropriations, viz. for the capitol and President's house, the only ones made until the year 1796, were published on the engraved plan, promulgated by the President, and were declared to be sanctioned by him, at all the public sales of lots which took place at the early period of the city. The commissioners, and all others who have made sales of lots in the city, have made their sales and contracts under a full persuasion, that these appropriations were permanent and unalterable.

When the President has, under the deed of trust, once executed his power by establishing a public appropriation, how far he can afterwards change or abolish it, or how far a court of equity will countenance and sustain sales made by the commissioners, of lots, apparently contiguous to some great national building, which is afterwards abolished, or changed by the President, are questions worthy of consideration, and will, no doubt, be well weighed before they are acted upon.

It cannot be questioned but that a change in the city, to the extent contemplated by your letter, must shake public confidence to its centre, and create more contentions than can at present be easily foreseen. It was the decided opinion of the late President that real inconveniences would result from the public offices being near the hall of Congress. This opinion, with the reasons for it, were publicly declared to the board, on the ground, when these sites were fixed. The frequent communications between the President and departments, which must, of necessity, take place, would render it convenient and proper that they should not be far apart. These observations were made by the President, when occupied on this subject. If the measures recommended by you were well founded in principle, which we cannot but deny, the policy or expediency would still be very questionable. We think that the erecting of the south wing of the capitol, for the purpose proposed, is not only improper, but impracticable, with all the aid expected from Congress. You know that the foundation walls of that part of the building have been much questioned, and have not yet been well examined. The north wing

now on hand, and not yet carried within eight or ten feet of the intended height, including the balustrade, hath cost the sum of \$ 229,223 97, though the two great articles of free stone and timber, for that wing, or a great part at least of these articles, were laid in when they were a little more than half the present prices. Can we safely calculate that the south wing would, at the present advanced prices of every material, and of labor, cost less than the north has done?

With respect to converting the President's house into a judiciary, it may be remarked, that it is much too large, and by no means fitted to that object. That fifteen rooms in the capitol, beside those for Congress, averaging not less than twenty-four feet ten inches, by thirty-five feet, and some much larger, will well afford one for a temporary judiciary, and leave a sufficient number for the committees of Congress.

Since writing the above, we have received a letter from two principal original proprietors of the city, a copy of which we enclose to the President, together with a copy of this letter.

We are sir, &c.

G. SCOTT,

W. THORNTON.

Alexander White, esq. Philadelphia.

Georgetown, 15th March, 1798.

GENTLEMEN,

Mr. Dunlop, who has just returned from Philadelphia, mentions that efforts were making by Mr. ——— and others, not discouraged, as he understood, by Mr. White, to remove the public offices for the great departments, from the President's square to the capitol.

We hope it will not be forgot, that the late President, at a meeting between himself and the proprietors of the ground in the city, produced the plan of the city which he had determined to adopt, placing the offices for the Treasury and War Departments, near the President's house; and that this took place before the deeds were given by the proprietors for the ground; at the same time the President explained his reasons for fixing these buildings convenient to the President's house. More than fifty people attended on this

occasion, and witnessed this transaction. Mr. Young, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Burns, and others in the city, must remember the circumstance here mentioned. Nor can you have forgot, gentlemen, that President Washington fixed on the actual spots for those buildings, when on his way to Congress, in Oct. 1796. Feeling ourselves interested that the original design should not, without evident necessity, be departed from, we have taken the freedom to make this communication, and

Remain, with high respect, gentlemen,

Your most obedient servants,

ROBERT PETER,

SAMUEL DAVIDSON,

Gustavus Scott and William Thornton, esqs.

Commissioners of Washington City.

Washington, 18th April, 1798.

SIR,

The commissioners were informed, by a letter from Mr. White of the 11th of March last, "that the President was of opinion, that the executive offices ought to be erected as near the capitol as a convenient site could be found for them, as well for the accommodation of the members of the legislature, who have frequent occasion to recur to those offices, as a means of collecting the inhabitants to a point so as to secure accommodation for the government, when the time comes for their removal." We exceedingly regret this opinion, because the late President always held up the idea, that the executive offices ought to be attached to the President's house, for this obvious reason, that the business of heads of departments was principally with the President, and not only so, but he stated that it was an universal complaint among them, that while the Legislature was in session, they could do little or no business, so much were they interrupted by the individual members, that they were often obliged to go home, and deny themselves, in order to transact the current business of their departments. He not only gave us his opinion, with his reasons, but on the ground, personally pointed out the places on which the executive buildings were to be erected, with orders to erect them there, when we should possess the means. We now possess the means, and consider the act of the late President, as full authority to proceed in the work. We flatter ourselves, the present President will not obstruct this measure, because the erecting those buildings in any other place,

would indicate an intention to abandon the President's house as the residence of the President, which, we think, cannot be done consistent with the good faith due to those who gave up the property on and near which it stands, and those who have purchased in the vicinity. We are likewise of opinion, that a change in the situation of these buildings, instead of tending to secure accommodations for the government when the time comes for their removal, will have a direct contrary effect; because it will withdraw from those who hold property in that part of the city the strongest inducements to build, that of immediate profit; it will not lessen the buildings near the capitol, because the utmost exertions of the proprietors in that vicinity, will not be sufficient to provide more houses than will be immediately occupied on the removal of the government. We intend to cease the works on the President's house, as soon as it can be laid by in safety, till the buildings more immediately necessary shall be finished; but we wish not to do an act, which, in our opinion, would be injurious, not only to individual rights, but to the general interest of the city.

We are informed, that a bill has passed both Houses of Congress, authorizing a loan of \$100,000, for completing the public buildings in this city; but that it had not, when Mr. White left Philadelphia, been presented to the President for his approbation. That approbation, we have no doubt, it has received, and in consequence, have written to the Secretary to forward us the act, with directions as to the forms to be pursued in obtaining the money. We wish the business may be completed as soon as convenient, to prevent the necessity of selling stock at its present low price. Part of the money will be wanted in ten days.

We are, with sentiments, &c.

G. SCOTT.

W. THORNTON.

A. WHITE.

President of the United States.

Washington, 7th May, 1798.

SIR,

We took the liberty of addressing you by letter, dated the 18th ult. on the subject of the executive offices, expressing our regret that your opinion did not coincide with that of your predecessor, agreeably to whose order we should long since have commenced the work, had we possessed the means, and expressing our hope, that now we do possess the means, you will not obstruct the measure. We stated some of the reasons which the late President was pleased to inform

us, governed him in respect to the sites of these buildings, and our own reasons for believing a change in this arrangement would be injurious. We flattered ourselves that we should receive an answer to this letter, and were not without hopes of the concurrence of the present President with his predecessor and ourselves on this subject. We are sensible the pressure of more weighty business may have occasioned you to delay an answer, unless, indeed, you meant to give counter orders, in which case, we presume, you would have communicated them before this time, as the building season is fast advancing. We consider the existing orders as sufficient authority for us to proceed with the building; but to secure the completion of the north wing of the capitol, and the finishing whatever buildings may be commenced, in due season, we mean at present only to contract for one of the executive buildings, and as soon as that shall be undertaken, to discontinue the work on the interior of the President's house, leaving the other executive building untouched, and only finishing the stone work (which is nearly completed) and slating the roof of the President's house, till the extent and efficacy of our resources are better known. We will receive proposals for undertaking the building now to be erected, till the 20th day of June next, of which notice will be given in the newspapers of Philadelphia, Baltimore and Alexandria.

We are, with sentiments of the highest respect, &c.

G. SCOTT,
W. THORNTON,
A. WHITE.

President of the United States.

Philadelphia, May 10, 1798.

GENTLEMEN,

I have this morning received your favor of the 7th instant, and although I have not found time to answer your former letters, I will give you a short answer to this, that you may meet with no delay or embarrassment in your proceedings. Although I may have been inclined to an opinion, that a variation of the measures might have more surely prepared the city for the residence of government at the time prescribed, I have been far from feeling any determination to give order contrary to your unanimous judgment. I therefore, approve of your proceeding, without loss of time, in the manner you propose in this letter.

I am Gentlemen,
With much esteem,
Your humble servant,

JOHN ADAMS.

Commissioners of Washington City.

